

Umatilla
Summer 2002

Contact Us

**Umatilla
Chemical Disposal
Outreach Office**

190 East Main Street
Hermiston, OR 97838
(541) 564-9339

**Outreach Office
Hours**

Monday–Friday
8:30 a.m.–5 p.m.
Other hours by
appointment

**Umatilla Chemical
Depot**

Public Affairs Office
(541) 564-5312

Umatilla Chemical Agent Disposal Facility Trial burns: What to expect

Bill Hampton leads a team of engineers preparing the Umatilla Chemical Agent Disposal Facility's incinerators for chemical warfare agent disposal next year. This summer, Liquid Incinerator 1 will be the first furnace to undergo a testing process known as a Surrogate Trial Burn.

"We started heating it up in mid-April," Hampton said. "We've been testing, training and fine tuning since then. We've been moving through our checklist to make sure it's in perfect working order."

The U.S. Army Program Manager for Chemical Demilitarization is making great strides toward the goal of eliminating chemical weapons nationwide. Incinerators at Johnston Atoll in the Pacific Ocean and at Tooele, Utah, have destroyed about one-quarter of the national stockpile.

More plants will soon come online, including incinerators at Anniston, Ala.; Pine Bluff, Ark.; and neutralization plants at Aberdeen, Md., and Newport, Ind. At Umatilla, the four-year construction phase ended in August 2001, and the testing phase is in full swing.

Before Umatilla begins destroying chemical weapons, the facility will conduct trial burns of the facility's incinerators. These trial burns—which typically last eight days each—will be held periodically through summer and fall 2002. They will involve surrogate material rather than actual chemical warfare agents.

For example, trichlorobenzene, a solvent used in drain and septic tank cleaners, and perchloroethylene, once widely used as dry



The Umatilla Chemical Agent Disposal Facility.

cleaning solvent, are surrogates to be used in the liquid incinerators. Solutions of ethylene glycol and various metals will be added to the surrogate feed to demonstrate compliance with metals emissions standards.

The facility's hazardous waste permit requires furnaces to destroy 99.9999 percent of the chemical agent.

"Because surrogate chemicals are harder to destroy than chemical agent, meeting the 99.9999 percent destruction and removal standard for surrogates will assure the furnace can effectively destroy chemical agent," said Don Barclay, the facility's Site Project Manager.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality will monitor and evaluate the surrogate trial burns for each of the project's two liquid incinerators, the deactivation furnace system and the metal parts furnace.

More information about trial burns and the incineration process can be obtained by calling or visiting the Umatilla Chemical Disposal Outreach Office (see contact information on this page).

An interview with the site project manager

"Our training programs are extensive and our workers are the tops in their field. We far surpass what the chemical industry has accomplished in terms of safety. If we were just average, we wouldn't be allowed to do this."

—Don Barclay,
Umatilla Chemical Agent
Disposal Facility
Site Project Manager



Don Barclay

In April 2001, Don Barclay began work as the U.S. Army's Site Project Manager for the Umatilla Chemical Agent Disposal Facility. A Tennessee native, Barclay worked in the Army's chemical weapons disposal program for eight years before coming to Umatilla. He lives in Hermiston.

What is your impression after a year on the job?

I am especially pleased with community support for destroying the stockpile. People tell me, "Don't get distracted, get the place started, and stay on schedule." I'm also impressed with the abilities and dedication of our workforce. Their families and friends live in this community, so our workers are just as concerned about seeing these weapons destroyed safely and as quickly as possible.



Carla Gutcher of Washington Demilitarization Company inspects the plant's air filter system.

What do you say to concerns expressed about safety?

I want people to question our program. Chemical weapons disposal is a very complex program. Despite this, the program has had tremendous success. The Umatilla facility will build upon that success. Our training programs are extensive and our workers are the tops in their field. We far surpass what the chemical industry has accomplished in safety. If we were just average, we wouldn't be allowed to do this.

What do you say to concerns about wastes created during incineration?

Under our state environmental permits, we cannot begin disposal operations without first resolving all issues involving secondary wastes. We have committed to leaving no "legacy" wastes behind following incineration of chemical agents, meaning all secondary wastes will be treated and disposed before we complete work.

This project has been criticized for all the engineering changes since construction began, numbering in the thousands.

This is a massive, complex project. Many of these changes have been minor and some have been major. It's important to know they are done for the right reasons: to make the facility operate more efficiently, to make it even safer and to accelerate disposal of chemical agents.

Why are you talking about acceleration?

Since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, we have been looking at ways to eliminate the stockpile more quickly. Adding a neutralization plant at Umatilla to destroy mustard agent, to run concurrently with the incineration plant, has been one option considered by the Army. But there are other ways to accomplish the same end. One of them is to reconfigure the order in which we process munitions and agents at Umatilla. There is a potential to save months on the schedule. In any case, we look forward to working in partnership with the state and community.

In summary, what do you want people to know about this project?

I want them to know we put safety first; that we will not begin operations before we are absolutely ready. And I'm glad to know the majority of this community looks forward to the day we begin agent disposal as eagerly as we do. We're in this together.

Frequently asked questions about chemical weapons storage and disposal

When will the Army start disposal and how long will it take?

The project completed its four-year construction in August 2001 and is now undergoing testing activities. Disposal operations are scheduled to begin in 2003 and end about six years later.

How many people will work at the facility?

As of June 2002, the Washington Demilitarization Company (WDC) hired 633 of a projected staff of 750 employees. In addition, the Umatilla Chemical Depot is adding staff to support the incineration facility, with a projected total of 290 employees. For hiring information, call the Umatilla Chemical Depot at (541) 564-5205 and WDC at (541) 564-7231.

How will the plant operate?

Take the example of destroying a cannon shell filled with chemical agent. Using automated equipment, the shell will be drained of its liquid chemical agent and explosive components removed. The nerve agent will be sent to a liquid incinerator, explosives to the deactivation furnace and the empty steel casing to the metal parts furnace.

Will nerve agent be released from the stack?

No, as organic compounds, chemical agents are destroyed by the incinerator's extremely high temperatures. A pollution abatement system thoroughly cleans the air emissions and ensures they meet or exceed clean air regulations set by law.

What waste products are created?

Similar to many other industrial processes, chemical weapons disposal produces waste byproducts, such as scrap metal, brine solution and ash. These wastes are treated and checked to ensure all chemical agent has been destroyed. The wastes are then sent to approved hazardous waste landfills.

Is moving chemical weapons from their "igloos" the most dangerous part of disposal operations?

Like all ammunition, chemical weapons were designed to be moved safely from the manufacturing plant to the storage depot and to the battlefield.

Special design features, strong packing materials and strict handling procedures help ensure safety during movement. Further, the Umatilla munitions will be placed in stainless steel containers designed for extra protection from leaks, fire and impact while being moved to and stored in the disposal plant.

What are "leakers" and should I be worried?

"Leakers" are munitions found to be leaking extremely small amounts of agent vapor while in their storage bunkers. Because they are found in the very early stages, they do not pose a threat to human health or the environment. However, to ensure their continued safe storage, they are overpacked into steel containers and monitored daily.

What is the future use of this plant?

By law, the facility cannot be used for any other purpose than disposing the Umatilla chemical agent and weapons stockpile. The building where the weapons will be incinerated must be demolished once disposal is completed. The Local Reuse Authority—which includes representatives of local counties, ports and tribes—will determine the depot's future.

What should I do in a chemical weapons emergency?

If you are within eight to 10 miles of the depot, the Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program asks that you respond in these three ways: (1) Go inside, (2) Listen to your tone alert radio or KUMA 107.7 FM in Oregon or KONA 610 AM in Washington and (3) Stay off the phone. More information is available at <http://www.csepp.net>.

Does the depot have adequate security?

Safety and security will always be the depot's top priority. This is even more true since Sept. 11. The depot has been at heightened security since then and will remain so for the foreseeable future. For example, additional soldiers have augmented the depot's security force. Tours and other public activities have been curtailed, and depot security remains in contact with local, state and federal law enforcement agencies.

We want to hear from you...

The Umatilla Chemical Disposal Outreach Office serves as a clearinghouse for information about the chemical weapons stored at Umatilla Army Depot and the Army's plans for chemical weapons disposal. The outreach office has informational materials that can address your questions or concerns.

If you would like more information about the Umatilla Chemical Agent Disposal Facility, please telephone (541) 564-9339 or complete this form and mail it to:

**Umatilla Chemical Disposal
Outreach Office**
190 East Main Street
Hermiston, OR 97838

Would you like to be added to our mailing list?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Would you like an information packet mailed to you?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If you answered yes to either of these questions, please complete the following:

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone (optional) _____

E-mail (optional) _____

The Outreach Office schedules speaking presentations that can be given to large or small community groups, clubs, organizations, etc. If you know of a community group that might be interested, please complete the following:

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone (optional) _____

E-mail (optional) _____

